

COUNCIL MEETING

MONDAY 9TH FEBRUARY 2009

DEPUTATIONS AND PETITIONS

AGENDA ITEM NO. 5

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE HEAD,
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

SUMMARY

1. The Council's constitution provides that a maximum of three deputations and three petitions are received at any meeting. These are taken in the order of receipt. This report sets out the deputations and petitions submitted by members of the public for presentation at Council on 9th February 2009.
2. The deadline for receipt of deputations and petitions is noon on Tuesday 3rd February. However, Members will note that the attached report already includes the maximum three petitions and three deputations for the meeting.
3. In each case the members of the deputation/petitioners may address the meeting for no more than five minutes. Members may then question the deputation/petitioners for a further five minutes. The relevant Lead Member or Chair of Committee may then respond to the deputation or petition for up to three minutes.
4. Any outstanding issues will be referred to the relevant Corporate Director for attention who will respond to those outstanding issues in writing within 28 days.
5. Members should confine their contributions to questions and answers and not make statements or attempt to debate.

5.1 DEPUTATIONS

Three deputations have been received as set out below:-

5.1.1 Deputation from Ms. Claire Palmer and others regarding the effect of the economic downturn on residents:

“The latest reports on the state of the economy confirm that we are in the worst economic situation for 50 years and that all other financial downturns pale into insignificance in relation to the situation we find ourselves in. Although the British economy has been relatively robust so far, there is no doubt it will see a severe slowdown, with growth expected to decelerate from 3% last year to just 1.7% next year by the best forecasts.

This has begun to have an affect on the average family with second quarter repossession up by 71% on last year's figures. Alongside this we have seen a rise in unemployment with more that 40,000 extra people signing on for unemployment benefit in November and a projected rise of the unemployment figures to 3.3 million by 2010. Significantly for Tower Hamlets, we have also seen a sharp decline in the number of new homes being built so that 2008 will be the worst year for house building since 1957. Since so many of the Government's and Council plans, including the pledge by Labour Councillors at the last election to see £300 million new housing in the borough, depend on the private sector's robust building plans this will have an effect on the provision of affordable housing for residents.

Tower Hamlets is the 4th most deprived borough in London with only half its population economically active and therefore heavily susceptible to a downturn of this kind. Based on the Council's own data from its local resident survey 2008 around 20% of the population was concerned about a lack of jobs within the area while the supply of affordable housing was considered a concern to most residents. Areas of high prosperity in the borough depend on the economic health of Canary Wharf while large parts of the borough look to the retail sector. Both of these areas will be hit hard by any down turn in spending with a subsequent rise in residents concerns over lack of employment and housing.

We ask the Council to Note

- That the economic downturn is going to have a large effect on the borough's residents and a proportionality higher effect on those who are less financially well off;
- That residents are going to need all of the money that they can get their hands on in the months ahead;
- That shops and businesses in the area depend on people spending money to stay in business and to provide employment to people in the area;
- That the Council can have both a positive and negative affect on the lives of residents depending on the decisions it takes.

We Residents Believe

- That the current economic situation poses a grave risk to the lives and businesses of residents to this borough;
- That it is the role of the Council to provide as much assistance as is possible, within the limits placed upon it by financial restraint and Government control to residents of this borough;
- That costs levied by the Council in the form of Council Tax, service charges, fees and administration costs are a strain on hard pressed families at this time and should be limited as far as possible;
- That business rates should be set at a level that reflects the hardship that many local businesses are facing.

We call upon the Council and the Leader of the Council to ensure

- That Council services for 2008/09 are 2009/10 are capable of delivering the services that people of this borough will need at this time;
- That the Council's elderly and child services are aware that more elderly residents and children in the borough will suffer as a result of increased costs and declining income;
- That the Council ensures that all residents are made fully aware of Council and Governmental schemes available to them to help alleviate the worst effects of this downturn;
- That the Council does all it can to ensure that business rates are lowered to allow local shops to better compete better in the months ahead;
- That Council Tax and service charges are capped at their present level for the next two years;
- That the council should use all its influence on the local RSLs to cap their service charges."

5.1.2 Deputation from Mr. Dave Coker and residents of the Exmouth Estate about the decline in living standards on the Exmouth Estate since the transfer to Swan Housing:

"We the undersigned are residents of the Exmouth Estate. We protest the decline in living standards on the Exmouth Estate since the transfer to Swan Housing.

Since this transfer we have noted a significant decline in living standards on the Exmouth Estate. Day to day maintenance is not done in a timely manner, if at all. Significant quality of life issues such as broken security locks simply are not addressed.

Indeed, due to our landlord's inaction, entire blocks have been rendered accessible to non residents. The Metropolitan Police now have to focus

special patrols on the Exmouth Estate due to our landlord's poor management.

When the estate was transferred, Swan Housing made several promises to Exmouth Estate residents in a formal offer document dated October 28th 2005. The promises included:

- *"maintain buildings in a good condition"* Swan Housing have violated this agreement
- *"respecting and protecting the rights of leaseholders"* Swan Housing have violated this agreement
- Swan Housing originally proposed two alternatives for Brayford Square. However without consulting all residents of the estate, our landlord is now pursuing a third course of action, partial redevelopment of the block. This unilateral decision violates the spirit, if not the letter of the offer document.

Due to our landlord's poor management of the Exmouth Estate our property values have been negatively impacted. Quality of life for large numbers of residents has sharply declined. Many of us are no longer proud of living conditions on our estate.

We urgently request the Tower Hamlets Council to urgently review agreements in force between Swan Housing and LBTH. We urgently request the Tower Hamlets Council to demand an explanation from, and hold our landlord accountable for these actions.

5.1.3 Deputation from Latham House residents in support of the motion regarding Latham House submitted by Councillor Md. Mamun Rashid (see agenda item 11.11)

This Council wishes to express its concern over the continuing uncertainty over the future of Latham House and the limitations on tenancy rights of its residents.

This Council notes the dissatisfaction of the residents of Latham House with the Housing Associations which lease the building and of which they are the tenants.

This Council believes that the Council should take Latham House back into Council ownership at the earliest possible opportunity and that the residents of Latham House should also be given secure tenancies at the earliest possible opportunity.

This Council also believes the future of Latham House must be resolved at the earliest opportunities to remove the uncertainty currently blighting the lives of its residents.

5.2 PETITIONS

Three petitions have been received as set out below:-

5.2.1 Petition from residents of the British Estate and others regarding the establishment of a Tesco Express Supermarket on Bow Road

“We, the undersigned residents of British Estate/Bede Estate/Eric Estate/Malmesbury Estate and the surrounding area oppose the establishment of a Tesco Express Supermarket on Bow Road for the following reasons:

1. It will seriously affect local business with the prospect of 15 local shops now being put out of business, especially in the current economic climate;
2. It will deprive the area of choice and create a monopoly on goods available to local residents;
3. It will lead to an increase in unemployment in the area as a result of the loss of shops;
4. It will represent a betrayal of East End Homes’ original proposals in their offer document which proposed that shops would be relocated from their present position to be on Bow Road.

We urge the Council to endorse our views expressed above and to do all in its power to get this decision changed.”

5.2.2 Petition from Mr. Terrence Austin and the Four Estates Group regarding Island Homes

“We, the Residents of Island Homes, demand that One Housing Group (and Island Homes) restore the proper constitution and intention of Island Homes as contained in the original offer document, for which we voted, particularly with respect to Island Homes being Local, Responsive and Resident Led.

We further call on the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and the Housing Corporation to fulfil their roles as overseers by (a) investigating the actions and failings of both the Managing Director of Island Homes and of the “Parent”, and (b) instigating a process of mediation between One Housing Group/Island Homes and the Residents’ Groups mentioned in the Offer Document (Estate Management Organisations).”

5.2.3 Petition from Mr. Tazul Islam and residents of Devon's Estate regarding the anti social behaviour on the estate

"We, the undersigned residents of Devon's Road Estate, are fed up by the continuous antisocial behaviour on our estate. Cars are regularly being vandalised and youth are seen speeding up and down Bruce Road until early hours of the morning causing both noise nuisance and danger to pedestrians and houses. We the residents demand for a CCTV camera to be installed so the culprits could either be caught or deterred. We also request for more patrolling in the area. Women, men and children are feeling vulnerable living here on this estate."